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October 2013

# JOINT MILITARY EDUCATION

## Actions Needed to Implement DOD Recommendations for Enhancing Leadership Development

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# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-14-29](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

To facilitate unified operations across the services, DOD has provided JPME programs at departmental and service academic institutions for almost 30 years. In July 2012, the Director for Joint Force Development, who reports to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, tasked the MECC to review DOD's joint education objectives and institutions to help ensure that outcomes match requirements for the strategic environment projected for Joint Force 2020. Subsequently, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 mandated GAO to report to Congress on the analytical approach used by the MECC not later than 90 days after the Director submitted the MECC's report to GAO, which the Director did on July 1, 2013. In this report, GAO (1) identifies the purpose of DOD's study of the JPME program, and (2) assesses DOD's methodology used to conduct the Joint Professional Military Education study and its planning for follow-on actions. GAO analyzed the MECC's final report and relevant planning documents, interviewed DOD officials who conducted portions of the study, and reviewed leading practices for evaluating programs by GAO and other entities.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD establish well-defined timeframes for conducting any follow-on actions and include stakeholders necessary for implementation, and assess the costs of implementing recommendations made in the MECC's recent study of joint professional military education. DOD concurred with both of GAO's recommendations.

View [GAO-14-29](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or [farrellb@gao.gov](mailto:farrellb@gao.gov).

October 2013

## JOINT MILITARY EDUCATION

### Actions Needed to Implement DOD Recommendations for Enhancing Leadership Development

## What GAO Found

The purpose of the Department of Defense's (DOD) study of its Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) program was to identify (1) desired leader attributes as part of the JPME career-long learning experience needed to support DOD's strategic vision and (2) any gaps in the current educational program to facilitate the development of the leaders needed to achieve that vision. Specifically, a Military Education Coordination Council (MECC)—following direction from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director for Joint Force Development—proposed six desired leader attributes, including, for example, the ability to anticipate and respond to surprise and uncertainty, and concluded that the existing institutional structure for providing JPME should be retained. The MECC's gap analysis, however, indicated that in order to support the development of these attributes, a greater emphasis on career-long self-directed learning is also needed, among other things. In line with its findings, the MECC made 21 recommendations to improve the JPME program that address increased accessibility of educational programs, changes to teaching methodologies and assessment mechanisms, and enhanced use of technology.

DOD's methodology generally included leading practices for assessing training programs, but DOD has not yet fully planned for follow-on actions and engaged all stakeholders, nor has it assessed the costs of the MECC's recommendations to provide decision makers with more timely and complete information and help ensure that the study's results are implemented. Specifically, the MECC reviewed other related studies, conducted a gap analysis to identify gaps based on existing and future needs, used the best available data and acknowledged limitations—all practices identified by GAO and other government agencies and research institutions as leading practices for successful evaluations of training and other programs. By contrast, DOD documents state that the results of the study were intended to inform and shape the fall 2013 academic year, but the MECC did not complete its study until June 24, 2013 and provided its report to GAO on July 1, 2013. Further, DOD has not yet identified milestones and timeframes for implementing all of its recommendations. Subsequently, the department developed an update to inform actions for moving forward on its recommendations. DOD identified target dates for completion not later than September 2014 for 9 recommendations, but did not include interim milestones, and has not yet developed target dates for 12 recommendations. In addition, the MECC did not formalize plans to achieve the buy-in of all stakeholders for recommendation implementation. Without this information, it may be difficult for DOD to ensure that stakeholders agree on and are accountable for implementing the recommendations in a timely manner. Finally, the MECC did not analyze the costs or efficiencies associated with implementing its recommendations, but it identified 5 recommendations that could incur additional costs because they require further study. Leading practices such as accounting for program resources enable managers to better manage existing resources and plan for future programmatic needs. Without cost data on the study's recommendations or plans to assess cost in the near term as part of continued efforts to implement the results of the JPME study, decision makers could be hindered in determining the most efficient allocation of departmental resources for JPME.

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## Abbreviations

AJPME	Advanced Joint Professional Military Education
DLA	Desired Leader Attribute
DOD	Department of Defense
EMERC	Enlisted Military Education Review Council
EPMEP	Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy
JCOA	Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis Division
JPME	Joint Professional Military Education
MECC	Military Education Coordination Council
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
OPMEP	Officer Professional Military Education Policy
PAJE	Process for the Accreditation of Joint Education
PME	Professional Military Education

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October 23, 2013

## Congressional Committees

Professional military education is key to the development of the nation's armed forces, and it is the quality of that military education that distinguishes U.S. forces around the world.<sup>1</sup> As operations over the last decade have demonstrated, military officers must think critically, communicate well, conduct themselves with integrity, and lead others in difficult and often dangerous situations that require forces from across the military departments. The passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act in 1986 (Goldwater-Nichols) marked one of the most significant attempts over the past few decades to coordinate service efforts.<sup>2</sup> Among other things, the act sought to establish clearer lines of command and control and improve the ability of the services to work with each other in truly joint, rather than simply multi-service, operations. In the wake of Goldwater-Nichols, a panel chaired by Representative Isaac N. "Ike" Skelton IV in 1989 undertook a comprehensive review of joint professional military education (JPME) and made a number of specific recommendations on how the joint reforms of Goldwater-Nichols should be institutionalized among the services through officer in-residence education. Since the Skelton Report, Congress has passed additional legislation affecting the professional military education system, including a requirement to create a program of JPME, through which military officers would be educated on joint matters throughout their careers.<sup>3</sup> Over time, the Department of Defense (DOD) and others have conducted studies that, to some extent, reviewed the cumulative effects of these legislative changes.

The commitment within DOD to JPME demonstrates a major investment, both of time and money. Some of the education programs are an academic year in length, which represents a significant part of an officer's

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Congress, U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Another Crossroads? Professional Military Education Two Decades After the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Skelton Panel*, H.R. 111-4 (Washington, D.C.: April 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Pub. L. No. 99-433 (1986).

<sup>3</sup>10 U.S.C. § 2154.

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career. To support the academic programs, in fiscal year 2012, DOD spent approximately \$47.8 million on its JPME schools within National Defense University alone.<sup>4</sup>

In July 2012, DOD's Director for Joint Force Development, expanding on a white paper signed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, directed DOD's Military Education Coordination Council (MECC) to prepare a report on the value of the JPME program, the educational outcomes sought, and any changes necessary to strengthen the program's value to DOD. According to the director's memo, this review was necessitated by changes in the security environment, the fiscal climate, and the experiences of DOD's joint force since the passage of Goldwater-Nichols in 1986. Subsequently, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2013 required us to report to Congress on the analytical approach used by the MECC for that report not later than 90 days after receiving DOD's report from the Director for Joint Force Development.<sup>5</sup> Our report (1) identifies the purpose of DOD's study of the Joint Professional Military Education program, and (2) assesses DOD's methodology used to conduct the Joint Professional Military Education study and its planning for follow-on actions.

To identify the purpose of DOD's study of the JPME program, we reviewed the documents directing the study, the minutes of the MECC meetings, interim briefing report, and the MECC's final report, dated June 24, 2013.<sup>6</sup> We also interviewed knowledgeable DOD officials from the

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<sup>4</sup>According to its Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Estimates, DOD's National Defense University is the premier center for Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) and is under the direction of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. The university conducts JPME seminars, symposia, and professional development and conferencing for DOD and Congressional representatives. The National Defense University is located at Fort McNair in Washington, D.C. The dollar amount cited here, provided by a DOD official, includes both direct and reimbursable expenses and includes expenses for the Joint Forces Staff College (located in Norfolk, VA), the Dwight D. Eisenhower School of National Security and Resource Strategy, the National War College, and the CAPSTONE, PINNACLE, and KEYSTONE programs at the National Defense University. It does not include National Defense University's overhead costs, nor does it constitute the entirety of DOD's JPME expenses that are associated with the military services' JPME schools. According to a DOD official, it would be difficult to determine what percentage of the services' funding goes specifically to JPME because, in part, JPME is only a portion of their programs.

<sup>5</sup>Pub. L. No. 112-239, § 547 (2013).

<sup>6</sup>DOD provided us with a copy of its final report on July 1, 2013. We met our mandate with a draft copy of this report.

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Joint Professional Military Education Division within DOD's Joint Staff's Directorate for Joint Force Development (J7). The Joint Professional Military Education Division, in conjunction with the MECC, was responsible for leading DOD's effort. To assess the methodology DOD used to conduct the JPME study and its planning for follow-on actions, we analyzed relevant reports and guidance by GAO, the Office of Management and Budget, the Office of Personnel Management, and private sector organizations such as the RAND Corporation, among others.<sup>7</sup> We identified key practices contained in these documents for evaluating educational programs and information that were applicable for the purposes of this engagement. We then compared DOD's methodology with these select leading practices for educational program evaluation. We also reviewed documents identified by DOD officials as project plans for the study, as well as documentation of the department's intended follow-on actions. Again, we interviewed DOD officials from the Joint Professional Military Education Division within the Directorate for Joint Force Development. We also met with officials across DOD, representing institutions such as the National Defense University, the U.S. Army War College, and the Joint Forces Staff College, among others, who were identified as Team Leads for the study. Further details about our scope and methodology can be found in appendix I.

We conducted this performance audit from March through October 2013 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Background

Joint education is provided to some extent at all levels of officer and enlisted professional military education. The professional development and career progression for both officers and enlisted personnel through DOD's professional military education is a service responsibility; embedded within the professional military education systems is a program of JPME that is overseen by the Joint Staff.

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<sup>7</sup>See appendix I for a list of reports and guidance we reviewed.



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For officers, this system is designed to fulfill the educational requirements for joint officer management as mandated by law.<sup>8</sup> The joint education program is intended to prepare aspiring military leaders for both conducting operations in a coherently joint force and thinking their way through uncertainty. Officer JPME program courses are taught at multiple sites across the country, including the service Staff and War Colleges and the National Defense University.<sup>9</sup> See appendix II for a list and map of DOD's academic institutions where officer JPME courses are taught.

According to the Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP),<sup>10</sup> the JPME program for officers comprises curriculum components in the five levels of the officer professional military education system and includes three-statutorily mandated levels of JPME designed to progressively develop the knowledge, analytical skills, perspectives, and values that are essential for U.S. officers to function effectively in joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational operations. For each of those levels, the emphasis changes to provide instruction in target areas to enhance leader attributes of attending service members at their specific rank and tenure.

Within officer PME, the first level of JPME—precommissioning—provides officer candidate and officer training school, Reserve Officer Training Corps, and Military Service Academy students with a basic foundation in defense structure, roles and missions of other military services, the combatant command structure, and the nature of American military power and joint warfare. The second level of JPME—primary—provides junior officers at the O-1 through O-3 ranks<sup>11</sup> with primary education on the

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<sup>8</sup>10 U.S.C. §§ 2151-2157.

<sup>9</sup>Active duty and reserve officers can also satisfy some JPME requirements by completing the non-resident curricula provided by National Defense University and the services' schools.

<sup>10</sup>Department of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy*, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1800.01D (Washington, D.C., Dec. 15, 2011).

<sup>11</sup>O-1 through O-3 ranks denote the first through the third levels of commissioned military officer ranking, the titles for which vary among the services. O-1, or officer level 1, signifies an Army, an Air Force, or a Marine Corps Second Lieutenant, or a Navy Ensign. O-2, or officer level 2, signifies an Army, an Air Force, or a Marine Corps First Lieutenant, or a Navy Lieutenant Junior Grade. O-3, or Officer level 3, signifies an Army, an Air Force, or a Marine Corps Captain, or a Navy Lieutenant.

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tactical level of war. This level of JPME helps to foster an understanding of the Joint Task Force combatant command structure and how national and joint systems support tactical-level operations, among other subjects.

The third level begins the first statutorily-mandated level of JPME requirements—JPME Phase I.<sup>12</sup> This phase generally focuses on tactical and operational levels of war, and is typically attended by intermediate-level officers at the O-4 rank, as well as some officers at the O-5 and O-6 ranks.<sup>13</sup> JPME Phase I is incorporated into the curricula of the intermediate- and senior-level service colleges, as well as other appropriate educational programs that meet JPME criteria and are accredited by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This level of education provides officers the opportunity to gain better understanding from a service component perspective of joint force employment at the operational and tactical levels of war. The subject matter to be covered by JPME Phase I instruction must, by law, include at the least (1) national military strategy; (2) joint planning at all levels of war; (3) joint doctrine; (4) joint command and control; and (5) joint force and joint requirements development.<sup>14</sup>

The fourth level of JPME provides Phase II of the statutorily-directed JPME requirements.<sup>15</sup> JPME Phase II is a follow-on for selected graduates of service schools and other appropriate education programs that complements and enhances the JPME Phase I instruction. Phase II is taught at National Defense University's National War College and Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Management, the Joint Forces Staff College's Joint and Combined Warfighting School and Joint Advanced Warfighting School to both intermediate- and senior-level (O-5 and O-6) students, and at senior-level

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<sup>12</sup>10 U.S.C. § 2154(a).

<sup>13</sup>The O-4 rank denotes the fourth level of commissioned military officer ranking, the title for which varies among the services. O-4, or officer level 4, signifies an Army, an Air Force, or a Marine Corps Major, or a Navy Lieutenant Commander. The O-5 and O-6 ranks denote the fifth and the sixth levels of commissioned military officer ranking, the titles for which vary among the services. O-5, or officer level 5, signifies an Army, an Air Force, or a Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel, or a Navy Commander. O-6, or officer level 6, signifies an Army, an Air Force, or a Marine Corps Colonel, or a Navy Captain.

<sup>14</sup>10 U.S.C. §§ 2151(a), 2154(a)(1).

<sup>15</sup>10 U.S.C. § 2155.

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service colleges to senior-level students, and consists of courses on the operational and strategic levels of war. Phase II helps prepare officers for high-level policy and command and staff responsibilities, with a focus on areas such as national security strategy and joint strategic leadership. In addition to the subjects specified in JPME Phase I, the curriculum for JPME Phase II must, by law, include: (1) national security strategy; (2) theater strategy and campaigning; (3) joint planning processes and systems; and (4) joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational capabilities and the integration of those capabilities.<sup>16</sup> This phase completes the educational requirement for joint officer management.

The fifth and final level of instruction is the CAPSTONE course of JPME for general/flag officers<sup>17</sup> and focuses on the operational and strategic levels of war for high-level joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational responsibilities.<sup>18</sup> Specifically, the CAPSTONE course focuses on (1) the fundamentals of joint doctrine; (2) integrating elements of national power across military operations to accomplish security and military strategies; and (3) how joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational operations support strategic goals and objectives. This level of JPME is tiered to ensure the progressive and continuous development of executive level officers. Figure 1 summarizes the five levels of JPME.

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<sup>16</sup>10 U.S.C. § 2155(c).

<sup>17</sup>General/flag officer denotes rank above the O-6 level, the titles for which vary among the services. An officer at this rank in the Army, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps holds the title of Brigadier General or higher. A Navy officer at this level holds the title of Rear Admiral Lower Half or higher.

<sup>18</sup>10 U.S.C. § 2153.

**Figure 1: The Five Levels of Officer Joint Professional Military Education (JPME)**

1 Precommissioning	2 Primary	3 JPME Phase I <sup>a</sup>	4 JPME Phase II <sup>a</sup>	5 CAPSTONE <sup>a</sup>
<p><b>Who attends:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officer Candidate,</li> <li>• Officer Training School,</li> <li>• Reserve Officer Training Corps, and</li> <li>• Military Service Academy students</li> </ul> <p><b>Course focus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a basic foundation in U.S. defense structure, roles and missions of other military services, the combatant command structure, and the nature of American military power and joint warfare.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Who attends:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junior Officers at the O-1 through O-3 ranks</li> </ul> <p><b>Course focus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus is on the tactical level of war.</li> <li>• Helps foster understanding of the Joint Task Force combatant command structure and how national and joint systems support tactical-level operations, among other subjects.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Who attends:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intermediate Level Officers at the O-4 rank</li> <li>• Senior Level Officers at the O-5 and O-6 ranks</li> </ul> <p><b>Course focus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus is on the tactical and operational levels of war.</li> <li>• Required course elements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ national military strategy</li> <li>◦ joint planning at all levels of war</li> <li>◦ joint doctrine</li> <li>◦ joint command and control</li> <li>◦ joint force and joint requirements development</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Who attends:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Level Officers at the O-5 and O-6 ranks</li> </ul> <p><b>Course focus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus is on the operational and strategic levels of war.</li> <li>• Required course elements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ national security strategy</li> <li>◦ theater strategy and campaigning</li> <li>◦ joint planning processes and systems</li> <li>◦ joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational capabilities and the integration of those capabilities (as well as subjects specified in Phase I)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Who attends:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General/flag officers</li> </ul> <p><b>Course focus:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus is on the operational and strategic levels of war.</li> <li>• Course elements include high-level joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational responsibilities.</li> <li>• Other elements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ the fundamentals of joint doctrine</li> <li>◦ integrating elements of national power across military operations to accomplish security and military strategies</li> <li>◦ how joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational operations support strategic goals and objectives</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Source: GAO analysis of DOD documents and policy.

<sup>a</sup>Denotes statutorily-directed JPME course level.

In addition to meeting legislative requirements to provide education on JPME matters, DOD's colleges and universities that provide academic year-long programs for officers are Master's Degree-granting institutions. According to the Middle States Commission for Higher Education, the body that accredits National Defense University, among others, accreditation is the means of self-regulation and peer review adopted by the educational community. The accrediting process is intended to strengthen and sustain the quality and integrity of higher education, making it worthy of public confidence and minimizing the scope of external control. Accreditation by the Commission is based on the results of institutional reviews by peers and colleagues and attests to the judgment that the institution has met the following criteria:

- that it has a mission appropriate to higher education;
- that it is guided by well-defined and appropriate goals, including goals for student learning;

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- that it has established conditions and procedures under which its mission and goals can be realized;
  - that it assesses both institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes, and uses the results for improvement;
  - that it is substantially accomplishing its mission and goals;
  - that it is organized, staffed, and supported so that it can be expected to continue to accomplish its mission and goals; and
  - that it meets the Requirements of Affiliation and accreditation standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

DOD also conducts periodic assessments of the three statutorily-mandated levels of officer JPME to ensure that the curricula meet the prescribed joint educational requirements at each level, and uses the results of these assessments to update educational policy as appropriate.

For enlisted personnel, the Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy<sup>19</sup> circulates the policies, procedures, objectives, and responsibilities for enlisted professional military education and enlisted JPME. According to that policy, enlisted professional development and progression through the enlisted military education continuum is a service responsibility. The initial focus of enlisted professional military education is military occupational specialty training and education required to produce enlisted personnel capable of performing assigned tasks. Beyond occupational specialty training, the Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy states that all enlisted personnel also should be exposed to enlisted JPME as they progress through their respective services' enlisted professional military education system. In addition, the policy states that, for some enlisted personnel, more comprehensive joint education is required to prepare those servicemembers for specific joint assignments.

Enlisted JPME includes programs that span an enlisted member's career and apply to all enlisted personnel. Basic Enlisted JPME addresses educational guidelines that should be completed by pay grade E-6,<sup>20</sup> while Career Enlisted JPME addresses educational guidelines for senior enlisted personnel in grades E-6 or E-7 and above. Beyond these

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<sup>19</sup>Department of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy*, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1805.01A (Oct. 1, 2010).

<sup>20</sup>The general pay grade structure for enlisted personnel runs from E-1 through E-9.

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programs, Senior Enlisted JPME is a stand-alone Web-based course designed specifically for senior enlisted personnel in pay grades E-6 through E-9 who are serving in or are slated to serve in joint organizations. DOD's KEYSTONE course exists to prepare command senior enlisted leaders for service in flag level joint headquarters or joint task force organizations. This course is designed for personnel who are serving in pay grade E-9. The focus of this course is to enable command senior enlisted leaders to think intuitively from a joint perspective while serving in their capacity in a general/flag officer joint organization.

DOD also developed a program that, since 2003, has provided JPME specifically to reserve officers. In response to legislative direction,<sup>21</sup> the Joint Forces Staff College established a 40-week, blended learning Advanced Joint Professional Military Education program (AJPME) that consists of two distance learning periods and two face-to-face periods. Similar to the active component courses, the Officer Professional Military Education Policy outlines the requirements for AJPME. The program's mission is to educate reserve component officers to plan and execute joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational operations to instill a primary commitment to teamwork, attitudes, and perspectives. AJPME builds on the foundation established by the institutions teaching JPME Phase I and prepares reserve component officers (O-4 to O-6) for joint duty assignments.

DOD's JPME programs are approved by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Director for Joint Force Development retains responsibility to support the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the joint warfighter through joint force development, in order to advance the operational effectiveness of the current and future joint force. The Joint Staff's Directorate for Joint Force Development (J7) oversees general policy for the JPME programs. The MECC, which was tasked with conducting the most recent DOD-initiated study on JPME, serves as an advisory body to the Director of the Joint Staff on joint education issues. The purpose of the MECC is to address key educational issues of interest to the joint education community, promote cooperation and collaboration among the MECC member institutions, and coordinate joint education initiatives. Its membership consists of the MECC principals and a supporting MECC Working Group. These principals include the Director

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<sup>21</sup>See 10 U.S.C § 666.

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for Joint Force Development; the Deputy Director of the Joint Staff for Military Education; the presidents, commandants, and directors of the joint professional military education colleges and service universities; and the heads of any other JPME-accredited institutions. Additional representatives from other commands and organizations may be invited to participate as is appropriate. The MECC Working Group is comprised of dean's level/ O-6 representatives of the MECC principals. The Deputy Director of the Joint Education and Doctrine Division chairs the MECC Working Group. Additionally, the Secretary of Defense, service chiefs, and combatant commanders are invited to send participants to the MECC meetings to provide feedback to improve the educational process.

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## DOD's Study Was Intended to Identify Leader Attributes, Career-Long Education Goals, and Educational Gaps

The purpose of DOD's issued study of the JPME program was to identify desired leader attributes by defining what is needed from the JPME career-long learning experience to support DOD's strategic vision, as well as any gaps in the current educational program to facilitate the development of the leaders needed to achieve that vision. The original purpose and objectives for the study were laid out in a July 16, 2012, white paper from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a Joint Staff memorandum issued with the white paper.

In the white paper, the Chairman stated that the study's purpose was to support the development of the department's leaders by fostering the values, strategic vision, and critical thinking skills needed to lead and support the development of Joint Force 2020.<sup>22</sup> This white paper also identified four attributes that the department's education programs should develop in its leaders. Those attributes include the following:

- the ability to understand the security environment and the contributions of all elements of national power;
- the ability to deal with surprise and uncertainty;
- the ability to anticipate and recognize change and lead transitions; and
- the ability to operate on intent through trust, empowerment, and understanding.

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<sup>22</sup> Joint Force 2020—outlined in the September 10, 2012 *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020*—is the concept behind the Chairman's plan for the future force.

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The Chairman's white paper also stated that other attributes for leader development would evolve and would need to be aligned with future operations and incorporated into curricula to help ensure that gaps are identified and eliminated.

The memorandum, signed by the Director for Joint Force Development, identified three questions meant to shape the review. The first question focused on the value of joint education, why it is needed, and how the military will train and educate its leaders to meet the requirements of Joint Force 2020. The second question focused on the educational outcomes sought by the department, specifically with regard to training leaders for carrying out DOD's strategic vision, in order to help ensure alignment of desired leader attributes with the curriculum. The third question built upon the first two by focusing on any changes needed to strengthen and achieve the value and outcomes DOD seeks in building leaders for Joint Force 2020. The memorandum also instructed DOD's MECC to conduct the study.

Subsequent to the issuance of the white paper and memorandum, the MECC met on August 23, 2012, to refine the study's specific objectives. According to officials, at the direction of the Director for Joint Force Development, the MECC removed the requirement to address the value of joint education and instead focused its efforts on identifying the intended outcomes of the educational program and actions needed to achieve the outcomes. The MECC's discussions also established two broad objectives for the study—documented in meeting minutes and an enclosure—based on the direction in the memorandum and further direction received by the Chairman. The two broad objectives the MECC established were to:

1. define the Joint Education Continuum<sup>23</sup> needed to meet the joint leader development goals for Joint Force 2020, and
2. determine the gaps that need to be addressed for the Joint Education enterprise to progress from the current joint leader development outcomes to producing the future desired joint leader attributes for Joint Force 2020.

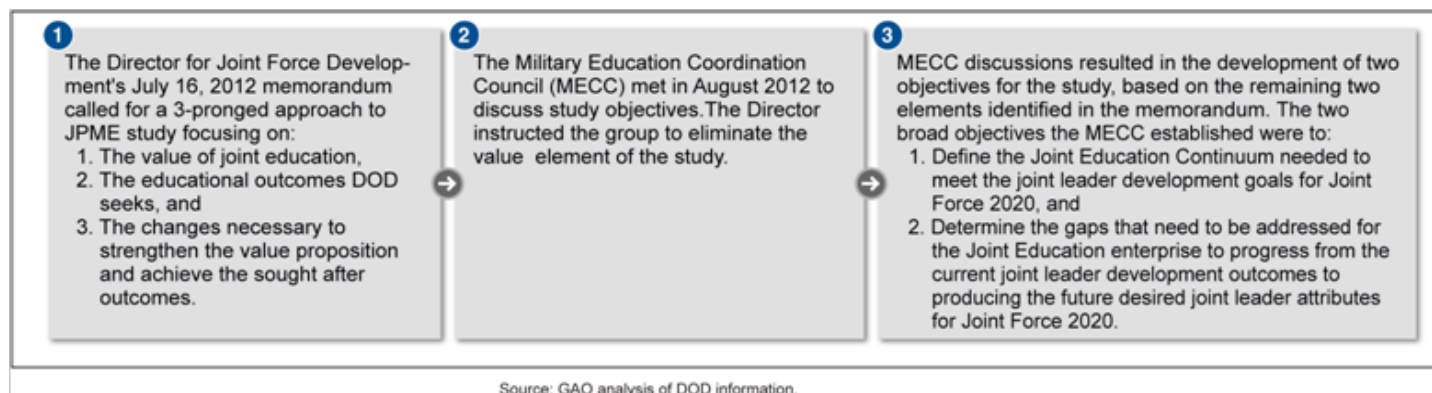
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<sup>23</sup>The Officer Professional Military Education continuum, and similarly the Enlisted Professional Military Education continuum, is a graphic representation of key elements of career-long officer (and enlisted) education that takes into consideration educational institutions and course curricula.



The evolution of the study's objectives is described below in figure 2.

**Figure 2: Evolution of Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) Study Objectives**



The MECC's first objective focused on defining and improving upon both the officer and enlisted joint education continuums to ensure that they are in line with the development goals for DOD's strategic vision. The MECC identified a need to retain many aspects of the current officer joint education continuum, as well as a need to incorporate new elements into the proposed officer joint education continuum that would help to meet the changing needs of future leaders of Joint Force 2020. For example, the proposed officer continuum retains the comprehensive approach of embedding elements of JPME at each level of service-delivered education with an emphasis on the statutory requirements for JPME Phases I and II, as well as key milestones from the precommissioning level of JPME to the general/flag officer rank. In addition to retaining the existing institutional structure for providing JPME education, however, in its report the MECC also emphasized the importance of self-directed, career-long learning and development. This facet of officer development is intended to convey an expectation that an individual is responsible for his or her own education and development, thereby inculcating a culture of lifelong learning. The MECC's study concluded, on the other hand, that changes to the enlisted JPME continuum—specifically, between the Senior Enlisted JPME and KEYSTONE courses—are needed to improve the depiction of the Chairman's intent for enlisted professional military education. Currently, enlisted personnel who complete the Senior Enlisted JPME course at pay grade E-6 or E-7 are not eligible to attend the KEYSTONE course until they attain pay grade E-9, potentially leaving a significant interval in time between participation in the two courses. Accordingly, the MECC recommended dividing the existing Senior

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Enlisted JPME course into two parts. Both parts would be offered prior to the KEYSTONE course and reduce the interval of time that senior enlisted servicemembers must wait between phases of enlisted joint education.<sup>24</sup>

The second objective expanded upon the first, and focused on identifying and closing gaps in the current JPME curriculum to produce joint leaders with attributes that are in line with Joint Force 2020. Specifically, the MECC refined the four attributes proposed in the Chairman's white paper, added two additional attributes, and identified a set of subattributes associated with each of the six desired leader attributes, that the MECC used to analyze the current capabilities of the department's joint education programs. The refined list of desired leader attributes consists of the abilities to:

1. Understand the security environment and contributions of all instruments of national power,
2. Anticipate and respond to surprise and uncertainty,
3. Anticipate and recognize change and lead transitions,
4. Operate on intent through trust, empowerment, and understanding,
5. Make ethical decisions based on shared values of the profession of arms, and,
6. Think critically and strategically in applying joint warfighting principles and concepts to joint operations.

The MECC then conducted a gap analysis to identify and crosswalk the desired leader attributes for Joint Force 2020 with the current officer and enlisted personnel JPME education continuums.

For officers, the MECC's analysis showed that, while the JPME program currently addresses the desired leader attribute outcomes at some level and also meets the intent of the existing requirements identified by the Skelton Panel, gaps exist where changes are needed to meet the challenges of Joint Force 2020. These include changes to teaching methodologies, assessment mechanisms, and other areas in support of the newly-identified desired leader attributes. Table 1 summarizes where

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<sup>24</sup>We discuss DOD's efforts to address the MECC's recommendations later in this report.

DOD has identified gaps in its officer JPME curricula associated with the identified list of desired leader attributes and subattributes.

**Table 1: Gaps in Officer Curricula Associated with the Desired Leader Attributes**

Joint Force 2020 Desired Leader Attributes (DLAs)	DOD assessment of the existence of gaps	Examples of identified gaps
1. Ability to understand the security environment and the contributions of all instruments of national power.	●	No gaps in curriculum.
2. Ability to anticipate and respond to surprise and uncertainty.	○	Additional faculty development may be required for instruction.
3. Ability to anticipate and recognize change and lead transitions.	◐	Additional scenarios and simulations for instruction may be required.
4. Ability to operate on intent through trust, empowerment, and understanding.	○	Some subattributes of desired leader attributes are not covered in curriculum and may require additional technology for simulations.
5. Ability to make ethical decisions based on the shared values of the profession of arms.	●	No gaps in curriculum.
6. Ability to think critically and strategically and apply joint warfighting principles and concepts in joint operations spanning all levels of warfare.	●	No gaps in curriculum.

Source: DOD.

**Legend**

- DOD did not identify any gaps in its JPME curricula to meet the desired leader attribute, and no corrective action is needed.
- ◐ DOD found potential gaps and that some refinement to the curriculum may be needed.
- DOD found that gaps exist in the JPME curricula to meet the desired leader attribute, and that corrective action is needed.

For enlisted personnel, the MECC determined that a separate and distinct set of desired leader attributes should be developed for senior enlisted leaders that will require additional study. Officials from the Joint Staff initiated this work on April 8, 2013 and assigned this task to DOD's Enlisted Military Education Review Council (EMERC).<sup>25</sup> The EMERC took up this effort at its August 22, 2013 meeting and proposed a list of six desired leader attributes for enlisted personnel. DOD officials provided us

<sup>25</sup>The Enlisted Military Education Review Council (EMERC) serves as an advisory body to the Joint Staff's Deputy Director for Military Education on enlisted joint education issues. The EMERC addresses issues of interest to the joint education community, promotes cooperation and collaboration among EMERC member institutions, and coordinates joint education initiatives.

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with the proposed list of enlisted desired leader attributes on September 16, 2013.

The MECC made a total of 21 recommendations, which collectively address the study's objectives and span four categories, including: (1) desired leader attributes, subattributes, or educational outcomes; (2) joint education continuums; (3) lifelong learning and advancements in learning technologies; and (4) faculty quality. See appendix III for a list of the 21 recommendations. Several of these recommendations call for additional study by the National Defense University and the services to support the achievement of leader attributes. Other recommendations emphasize the importance of strengthening the educational outcomes at the primary level of joint education, making education programs more accessible, and using prior learning assessments to tailor education opportunities to students' needs, among other things. One recommendation, in particular, calls for undertaking an approach to develop a separate and distinct set of desired leader attributes to guide enlisted joint education. Additionally, the MECC considered whether to make any legislative proposals, but did not identify the need for any legislative changes to the joint education enterprise based on the results of the review. According to officials, the results of the study will be used ultimately to inform updates and revisions to the Officer Professional Military Education Policy<sup>26</sup> and the Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy,<sup>27</sup> which are the primary instructions that distribute the policies, procedures, objectives, and responsibilities for professional military education and JPME. Our next section discusses DOD's plans in this area.

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<sup>26</sup>CJCSI 1800.01D.

<sup>27</sup>CJCSI 1805.01A.

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## Study's Methodology Generally Included Leading Practices, but DOD Has Not Yet Fully Planned for Follow-on Actions and Engaged All Stakeholders, or Considered Potential Implementation Costs

The methodology DOD used for its study of JPME generally included leading practices for evaluating strategic training and other programs, such as reviewing existing literature, using available data, and assessing skills gaps. However, the department has not yet fully planned for follow-on actions or fully engaged all stakeholders to help ensure that they are held accountable for making progress in implementing the study's recommendations. Specifically, the department has not taken steps to ensure that the results of the study will be implemented using an approach agreed upon by all stakeholders, or that the results will be implemented in a timely manner. Further, the department has not yet fully evaluated the potential costs associated with the implementation of the MECC's recommendations to provide decision makers with more complete information and assurance that the recommendations will be cost-effective.

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## MECC Reviewed Existing Literature, Used Available Data, and Assessed Gaps

According to our 2012 report, *Designing Evaluations*,<sup>28</sup> a key first step in designing a program evaluation is to conduct a literature review in order to understand the program's history, related policies, and knowledge base. A review of the relevant policy literature can help focus evaluation questions on knowledge gaps, identify design and data collection options used in the past, and provide important context for the requester's questions. Further, according to the RAND Corporation's *Standards for High-Quality Research and Analysis*,<sup>29</sup> a study team should demonstrate an understanding of other related studies, which should be evident in, for example, how a problem is formulated and approached. The team should also take particular care to explain the ways in which its study agrees, disagrees, or otherwise differs importantly from previous studies.

The MECC's report states that the initial step in its review was to determine the JPME enterprise's effectiveness in meeting its current requirements. According to an official, the MECC reviewed many documents as part of a literature review, but derived its findings from four

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<sup>28</sup>GAO, *Designing Evaluations: 2012 Revision*, [GAO-12-208G](#) (Washington, D.C.: January 2012).

<sup>29</sup>RAND Corporation, *Standards for High-Quality Research and Analysis* (Santa Monica, Calif.: November 2011).

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specific sources—all issued within the last 5 years—that it determined were most relevant to the review. Specifically, these sources were:

- The 2010 House Armed Services Committee (HASC), Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations (O&I), study<sup>30</sup> which provided a detailed assessment of the state of JPME;
- *A Decade of War*,<sup>31</sup> conducted by the Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis Division<sup>32</sup> within the Joint Staff (J7);
- *The Ingenuity Gap: Officer Management for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*<sup>33</sup>; and
- *Keeping the Edge: Revitalizing America's Military Officer Corps*.<sup>34</sup>

According to the MECC's report, these documents collectively provide a broad look across joint education. The MECC found that the 2010 HASC report, for example, provided a detailed assessment of the state of JPME, and concluded that while the overall PME system was basically sound, some areas needed improvement, such as an increased emphasis on joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational operations. Consistent with this finding, the MECC made a recommendation that the Joint Professional Military Education Division review specific subject areas for increased emphasis within joint education as part of the process of revising the officer and enlisted policies. These subject areas include cyber warfare, interagency and intergovernmental operations, and information and economic instruments of national power, among others. Further, these sources suggested that responsibilities for junior officers will increase and that joint education should be expanded at lower levels.

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<sup>30</sup> *Another Crossroads? Professional Military Education Two Decades After the Goldwater-Nichols Act and the Skelton Panel*

<sup>31</sup> Joint Staff J-7 Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA), *Decade of War, Volume I: Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations* (Suffolk, VA: June 15, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> In support of the Chairman's Joint Lessons Learned Program, and as directed, the Joint Staff J7 Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA) Division collects, aggregates, analyzes, and disseminates joint lessons learned and best practices across the range of military operations in order to enhance joint capabilities. JCOA examined over 400 findings, observations, and best practices to identify enduring lessons that can inform future joint force development in its *Decade of War, Volume I* study.

<sup>33</sup> Maren Leed and David Sokolow, *The Ingenuity Gap: Officer Management for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> John A. Nagl and Brian M. Burton, *Keeping the Edge: Revitalizing America's Military Officer Corps* (Washington, D.C.: Center for a New American Security, 2010).

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Similarly, the MECC found that officers are receiving joint education exposure earlier in their careers, and also recommended that the services strengthen the instruction of the desired leader attributes at the primary level of joint education for junior officers. Additionally, these sources recognized the need for increased emphasis on handling uncertainty and critical thinking skills. DOD's study also focused on the ability to anticipate and respond to surprise and uncertainty, and critical thinking in joint operations.

RAND's *Standards*<sup>35</sup> report further indicates that the data and information used for a study should be the best available and that a research team should indicate limitations in the quality of the available data. As part of its second objective, the MECC analyzed data from joint accreditation visits, that provided broad areas of assessment, and institutional survey and outcome assessments, that provided more detailed observations related to curricula. More specifically, the MECC conducted a review of the Process for the Accreditation of Joint Education (PAJE) reaffirmation results and institutional self-studies for the past 10 years.<sup>36</sup> DOD uses these studies to document compliance with the Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP) standards and identify areas for improvement. These reviews have not identified systemic problems or required changes of PME over the past 10 years, and have concluded that PME institutions are successful in meeting policy and curricula standards, as well as the intent of the Skelton Report. The MECC also obtained and analyzed existing survey data<sup>37</sup>—from various JPME institutions—of students, graduates, and supervisors of graduates as an indirect assessment of the programs to identify common areas and trends in JPME, as well as outcome assessments such as exams, quizzes, oral presentations, among other things, from the past 2 years as a more direct measurement of student learning. Consistent with the aforementioned RAND *Standards* report, while the MECC did leverage existing data, the

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<sup>35</sup>*Standards for High-Quality Research and Analysis.*

<sup>36</sup>According to the MECC's report, the peer-review PAJE process is conducted every 6 years and the reports provide a continuous, systemic examination of the health of the JPME system. The institutional self-studies are detailed assessments and form the foundation for the PAJE on-site visits.

<sup>37</sup>The MECC report states that because the vast majority of data concerning joint education have been focused on the statutorily mandated levels of JPME for officers (JPME Phase 1, JPME Phase II, and CAPSTONE), the data analysis portion of the second objective focuses solely on those programs.

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MECC's report also presented limitations of the existing survey data that it used for the study, stemming from variations in survey questions and measures that the separate JPME institutions used to conduct their own surveys.

Regarding gap assessments, our 2004 *Guide for Assessing Strategic Training and Development Efforts in the Federal Government*<sup>38</sup> highlights the need for determining the skills and competencies necessary to meet current and future challenges, and to assess any skill and competency gaps. According to the MECC's report, to determine the ability of joint education to meet the Joint Force 2020 joint leader development requirements, the MECC conducted a three-phase gap analysis. These three phases included: (1) refinement of the desired leader attributes, which included breaking these attributes down into subattributes; (2) analysis of data provided by 27 officer and enlisted programs across the JPME system to identify gaps in the JPME program;<sup>39</sup> and (3) gap analysis and documentation to break down the data into cohorts and rank the desired leader attributes. Specifically, 27 officer and enlisted programs, which included the services' staff and war colleges and National Defense University, among others, were asked to assess the current capabilities of their joint education programs to achieve Joint Force 2020 outcomes by addressing the following three questions:

- Is the curriculum effective, that is, do we teach it?
- Are current instructional methods effective, that is, how well do we teach and deliver it?
- Are we achieving the educational outcomes, that is, can we measure it?

According to its report, the MECC relied on the professional opinion of the academic deans of the JPME schools and directors of other joint education programs to make determinations about the effectiveness of their officer and senior enlisted programs based on the 35 subattributes identified by the MECC. To conduct the gap analysis, the MECC analyzed

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<sup>38</sup>GAO, *Human Capital: A Guide for Assessing Strategic Training and Development Efforts in the Federal Government*, [GAO-04-546G](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 2004).

<sup>39</sup>The 27 officer and enlisted programs surveyed as part of the gap analysis data collection included two precommissioning level, ten intermediate level, eight senior level and CAPSTONE programs, and six senior enlisted programs. According to the MECC's report, data were requested from primary schools but omitted from analysis due to time constraints.



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the 945 responses it received from the 27 programs and used a stoplight color coding scheme to summarize by cohort group each program's assessment of its current capabilities to achieve the Joint Force 2020 outcomes.<sup>40</sup> The gap analysis results were then coded, scored and ranked by officer cohort group (precommissioning, intermediate, senior, CAPSTONE) using four categories to describe the program's current capabilities. In turn, this gap analysis helped inform the MECC's 21 recommendations. While the MECC conducted a similar gap analysis for its senior enlisted JPME programs, the results of that analysis led the MECC to conclude that the department needed to further reconsider and redefine the desired leader attributes for enlisted personnel.

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**MECC Has Not Yet Fully Developed Timeframes and Coordinated with All Stakeholders, nor Assessed Costs for Follow-on Action**

The MECC has not yet fully developed timeframes and coordinated with all stakeholders, nor has it assessed the costs associated with implementing any of the study's recommendations. As a result, it is not clear how the department will obtain concurrence among its stakeholders regarding an approach for moving forward, or how the department will hold its stakeholders accountable for implementing change. Furthermore, the department will not know whether the implementation of its recommendations will be cost effective.

We have previously found<sup>41</sup> that project planning is the basis for controlling and managing project performance, including managing the relationship between cost and time. Our 2004 *Training Guide*<sup>42</sup> highlights the need for agencies to develop a formal process to help ensure that strategic and tactical changes are promptly incorporated in training and development efforts. Specifically, that report advises that agencies develop plans that describe or outline the way in which the agency intends to incorporate strategic and tactical changes into its training and developmental efforts. Our guide also highlights that including important agency stakeholders in the process can contribute to an open and

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<sup>40</sup>We did not independently assess the responses of the 27 programs or the MECC's determinations of any gaps as part of our review. For the purposes of our review, we have found that conducting a gap analysis is a leading practice and reviewed the MECC's approach accordingly.

<sup>41</sup>GAO, *GAO Schedule Assessment Guide: Best Practices for Project Schedules*, [GAO-12-120G](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 2012).

<sup>42</sup>[GAO-04-546G](#).

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continuous exchange of ideas and information, particularly when it comes to ensuring that strategic and tactical changes are promptly incorporated into training and developmental efforts.

According to the July 16, 2012 memorandum that directed the MECC study, the March 1, 2013 deadline for the results of the study was intended to help shape the fall 2013 academic year. The MECC completed its report on June 24, 2013, and provided us with a copy of the final report on July 1, 2013. Subsequently, officials provided us with an informational paper that identifies an office of primary responsibility and outlines details on the status of the recommendations. However, this paper does not fully lay out DOD's planned actions in a transparent manner. For nine of the recommendations, the document identifies potential target dates for completion, one of which is to be completed later in 2013, and eight of which are to be completed not later than September 2014. For the remaining 12 recommendations, DOD identified a target date for completion as either "not applicable" or "to be determined" because most of those recommendations fall under the purview of the services, the services' schools, or National Defense University. Accordingly, officials states that consideration or implementation of any recommendations that fall under the purview of these stakeholders is at the discretion of those organizations and, according to officials, the department cannot identify or impose timeframes for implementing those recommendations. We recognize that the implementation of several of the recommendations fall under the purview of the services, the services' schools, or National Defense University. However, the MECC has not yet reached out to these entities to identify estimated target dates for implementation to help guide these efforts. Further, the document does not identify interim milestones for specific actions between the date of the report and the target completion dates. The document also states that completion or implementation of a number of the recommendations is contingent on revisions to the Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy or the Officer Professional Military Education Policy, which officials estimated may take 12-18 months.

Officials did tell us that the Joint Staff's Joint Professional Military Education Division staff and members of the MECC are currently in the beginning stages of incorporating the changes into policy and that the individual schools may begin to incorporate changes resulting from the study at any time. However, at the time of our review, the department's process for monitoring the implementation of the MECC's recommendations was unclear. Without established milestones and timeframes for taking follow-on action, and mechanisms for coordinating

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with all key officials and stakeholders and holding them accountable, DOD may not be reasonably assured that the study's recommendations will be implemented across the department or that its JPME program will achieve the potential benefits resulting from these recommendations.

In addition, the department did not include a requirement that the MECC assess the costs associated with the JPME program or any recommendations resulting from the study. The MECC's report acknowledges that the resource-limited environment facing the Department of Defense will make it difficult to sustain current practices, such as maintaining small class sizes and small student-to-faculty ratios, at the intermediate and senior courses or to consider additional requirements for the lower-level courses. The report states that leveraging new learning approaches, such as increased distance learning options, will not provide an inexpensive or free solution for increased joint education requirements.<sup>43</sup> However, the MECC did not analyze or consider either the costs associated with implementing the study's recommendations or efficiencies to be derived from implementing the study's recommendations. Of the MECC's 21 recommendations, the MECC identified five recommendations requiring further study and other possible investments, which suggests a potential need for additional funding resources to conduct those studies and implement any findings. For example, the report included recommendations to (1) conduct a study to identify and evaluate potential educational tools to achieve certain desired leader attributes, and (2) consider and explore opportunities to incentivize and reward lifelong learning. The costs associated with these recommendations are unclear and officials responsible for the study could not provide us with cost estimates.

Prior studies of professional military education also did not or were unable to fully identify the costs associated with the overall JPME program, or with individual JPME programs. The Skelton Panel, for example, inquired into the cost per student at each school. The Office of the Secretary of Defense provided the panel with raw data produced with different methodologies by service, and sometimes by school, which resulted in

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<sup>43</sup>The MECC report states that the existing JPME process implements an adult learning model that comes at the high price of small class sizes and small student-to-faculty ratios. Most courses for junior officers and enlisted personnel do not have the resources to support this model; thus adding more joint education in officer and enlisted policy could pose challenges at all levels.

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widely varying costs for roughly similar programs. More recently, the House Armed Services Subcommittee for Oversight and Investigations<sup>44</sup> made its own effort to ascertain whether a uniform cost accounting system existed for DOD's professional military education system.<sup>45</sup> The Department provided cost-per-student figures with standardized criteria. Comparative figures were no longer characterized by such enormous variations, but there were still a number of unexplained differences in the data provided by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Our 2004 *Training Guide*<sup>46</sup> states that agencies should strategically target training and development investments to help ensure that resources are not wasted on efforts that are irrelevant, duplicative, or ineffective. Our *Training Guide* further recommends that agencies should consider the appropriate level of investment and prioritize funding so that the most important training needs are addressed first. We have previously concluded<sup>47</sup> that leading practices such as accounting for program resources enables managers to better manage existing resources and plan for future programmatic needs. Further, accounting for program resources is becoming increasingly important for decision makers within the department who must make difficult trade-off decisions in a sequestration budget environment.

According to officials, the MECC omitted any and all cost elements from the study so as to not limit their assessment of the department's needs for educating its leaders for Joint Force 2020 based on resources. Officials told us that they did not want to eliminate options for change based on the cost associated with them. However, by not assessing the cost of the MECC's recommendations, as well as any efficiencies that may be achieved through their implementation, DOD may not be in a position to know if it has the resources to implement them or whether efficiencies will be achieved, and, without plans to assess cost in the near term as part of continued efforts to implement the results of the JPME study, decision

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<sup>44</sup> *Another Crossroads? Professional Military Education Two Decades After the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 and the Skelton Panel Study of 1989.*

<sup>45</sup> The House Armed Services Committee's study was focused on professional military education as a whole, of which joint professional military education is a subset.

<sup>46</sup> [GAO-04-546G](#).

<sup>47</sup> GAO, *Environmental Justice: EPA Needs to Take Additional Actions to Help Ensure Effective Implementation*, [GAO-12-77](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 6, 2011).

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makers may not know if implementing their recommendations will be cost effective.

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## Conclusions

The experiences of the last 12 years of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have underscored the importance of U.S. military officers' ability to work jointly across the services and reinforced the need for an effective joint military education program. DOD's recently completed study of JPME is an important step forward as DOD considers how to adapt its joint military education program to reach the goals it laid forth for Joint Force 2020. Nonetheless, some questions remain about how well its findings can be applied to the task of revising the department's officer and enlisted JPME policies. Specifically, ensuring transparency and taking certain actions to ensure this study's findings and recommendations can be utilized effectively is important. For instance, without establishing milestones and timeframes for conducting follow-on actions, and involving necessary stakeholders and developing an implementation approach that provides for accountability, the department may not be assured that the study's findings and recommendations will be incorporated into the JPME program at institutions across the department and the services in a timely manner. Additionally, without reliable information on the costs of implementing the study's recommendations, decision makers could be hindered in determining the most efficient allocation of departmental resources for JPME. DOD's JPME program will continue to play a role in the future development of departmental leaders, and acting to help ensure the findings and recommendations of this and any future studies are both utilized and cost-effective could allow the department to make the best use of the resources it devotes to this program.

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## Recommendations for Executive Action

To guide the implementation of actions DOD identified in its study on JPME, we recommend that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff direct the Director for Joint Force Development to take the following two actions:

- establish well-defined timeframes for conducting follow-on actions, coordinate with all stakeholders, and identify key officials responsible for implementing the study's recommendations to help ensure the usefulness, timeliness, and implementation of any actions DOD takes in response to the findings and recommendations contained in its study, and

- 
- assess the costs of implementing recommendations made and efficiencies to be derived from the recommendations in order to implement DOD's recommendations in a cost-effective manner.

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## Agency Comments

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with our two recommendations to guide implementation of the actions that DOD identified in its review of joint education. DOD's comments are reprinted in appendix IV. DOD also provided technical comments on the draft report, which we incorporated as appropriate.

Regarding our first recommendation that DOD establish well-defined timeframes for conducting follow-on actions, coordinate with all stakeholders, and identify key officials responsible for implementing the study's recommendations, DOD stated that, as the Joint Staff pursues implementation of the recommendations in its review, it will establish timelines, identify offices of primary responsibility, and coordinate with stakeholders as appropriate. DOD also noted that efforts are already underway to update the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff's professional military education policies to ensure that these policy directives are consistent with the results and recommendations of the recent study.

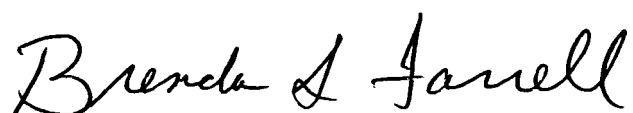
Regarding our second recommendation that DOD assess the costs of implementing recommendations made and efficiencies to be derived from the recommendations, the department again concurred, stating that, although assessing the costs of its recommendations is beyond the original scope and purpose in this study, it will consider costs and efficiencies prior to moving forward with the implementation of any recommendations. It also stated that a number of recommendations will be implemented through policy changes which are cost neutral. Further, it stated that the services will also consider such costs and efficiencies for recommendations under their purview.

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We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Directorate for Joint Force Development. In addition, this report will also be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://gao.gov>.

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If you or your staff have any questions regarding this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3604 or [farrellb@gao.gov](mailto:farrellb@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made major contributions to this report are listed in appendix V.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda S. Farrell". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Brenda S. Farrell  
Director  
Defense Capabilities and Management

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*List of Committees*

The Honorable Carl Levin  
Chairman  
The Honorable James M. Inhofe  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon  
Chairman  
The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives



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# Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

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To identify the purpose of the Department of Defense's (DOD) study of the Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) program, we reviewed relevant DOD guidance and other documents related to the study, including the final report dated June 24, 2013, and met with knowledgeable officials. We reviewed the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's July 16, 2012 white paper that called for and outlined the general focus of the study. We also reviewed the Director for Joint Force Development's (J7) memorandum that was issued with the white paper and clarified the overall intent of the study and specific questions to help frame the study, and directed responsibility of the study to the Military Education Coordination Council (MECC). We analyzed the MECC's meeting minutes and interim briefing report, which provided insight into how the MECC addressed the questions posed in the Director's memorandum, as its approach differed somewhat from the framework provided in the memorandum. We then compared the aforementioned guidance documents and interim report findings to the final report to assess consistency. In addition, we met with knowledgeable officials from the Joint Professional Military Education Division within DOD's Joint Staff's Directorate for Joint Force Development who, in conjunction with the MECC, were responsible for guiding DOD's effort. We also met with the officers of primary responsibility and/or team leads responsible for carrying out the various elements of the study. These meetings helped to ensure our understanding of the purpose and objectives of the study. We reviewed the final report section that focused primarily on the study's findings and recommendations for change to gain an understanding of the MECC's findings and recommendations. Further, we met with knowledgeable officials within the Directorate for Joint Force Development and the team lead for the findings and recommendations portion of the study to gain clarification and insight into the major takeaways from the study, areas in need of change, and any plans for the way ahead.

To assess the methodology DOD used to conduct the joint professional military education study and its planning for follow-on actions, we reviewed the MECC's final report and supporting documents. We interviewed DOD officials from the Joint Professional Military Education Division within the Directorate for Joint Force Development and officials from across DOD who were identified as officers of primary responsibility or team leads for specific study tasks associated with the study's two objectives. We reviewed relevant reports and guidance by GAO; the Office of Management and Budget; the Office of Personnel Management; and private sector organizations such as the RAND Corporation, among others, to identify select leading practices for evaluating training,

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educational, and other programs. The following list includes select sources we consulted for leading practices, in addition to those listed throughout the report, and against which we assessed DOD's JPME study:

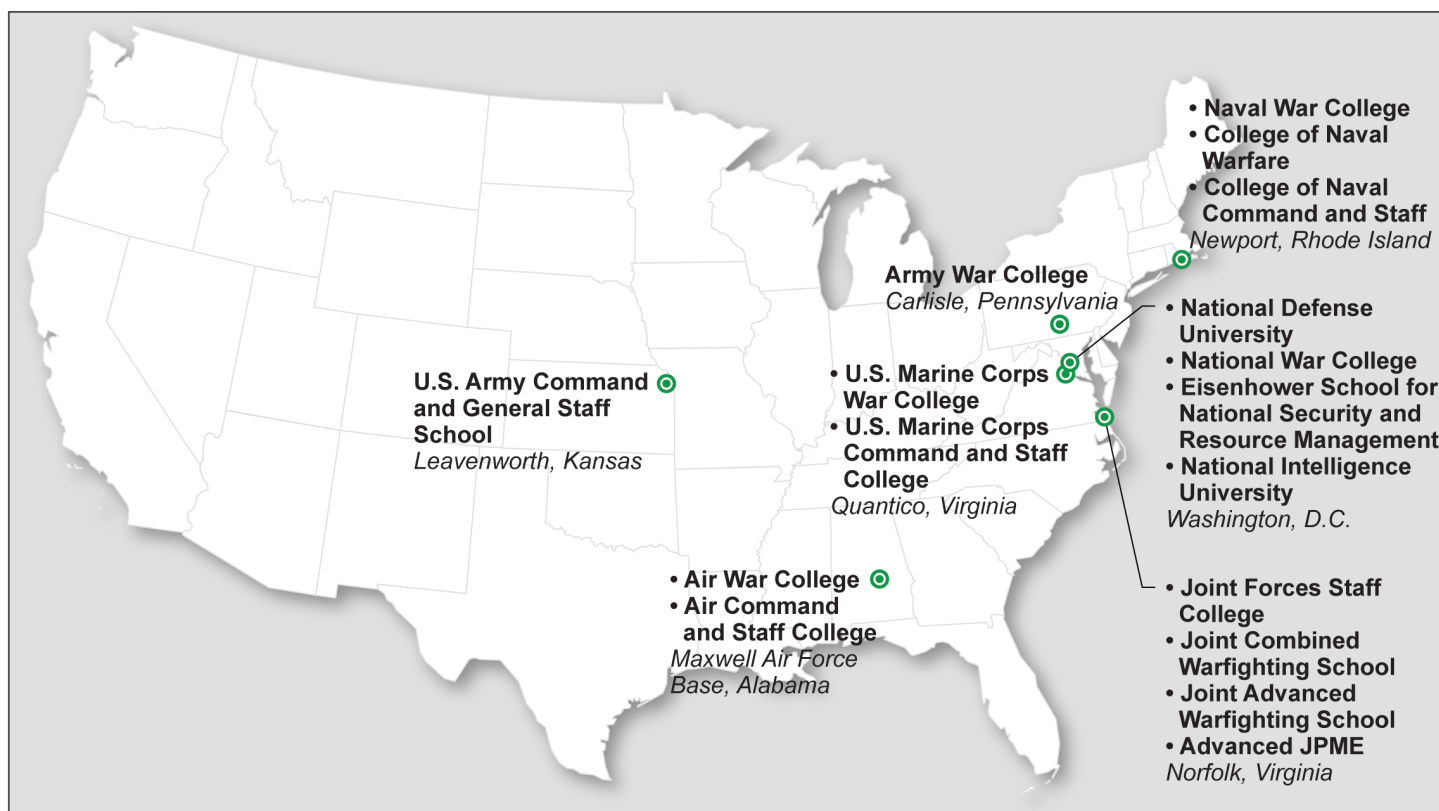
- GAO, GAO Schedule Assessment Guide: Best Practices for Project Schedules, [GAO-12-120G](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 2012),
- GAO, Designing Evaluations: 2012 Revision, [GAO-12-208G](#) (Washington, D.C.: January 2012),
- RAND Corporation, Standards for High-Quality Research and Analysis (Santa Monica, Calif.: November 2011),
- The Office of Personnel Management, Training Evaluation Field Guide (Washington, D.C.: January 2011),
- GAO, Government Auditing Standards: 2007 Revision, [GAO-07-162G](#) (Washington, D.C.: January 2007),
- GAO, Human Capital: A Guide for Assessing Strategic Training and Development Efforts in the Federal Government, [GAO-04-546G](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 2004),
- The Office of Management and Budget, Circular A-94, Guidelines and Discount Rates for Benefit-Cost Analysis of Federal Programs (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 29, 1992), and
- GAO, Designing Evaluations, [GAO/PEMD-10.1.4](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 1991).

We identified key practices contained in these documents for evaluating educational programs and information that were applicable for the purposes of this engagement. We then compared DOD's methodology with these select leading practices for program evaluation. We also reviewed documents provided to us and identified by DOD officials as project plans for the study, as well as documentation of the department's intended follow-on actions.

We conducted this performance audit from March through October 2013 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

# Appendix II: Officer Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) Institutions

Figure 3: Map of Officer JPME Institutions



Source: DOD.

## Department of Defense Institutions

- National Defense University (CAPSTONE, PINNACLE), Washington, DC
- Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Management, Washington, DC
- National War College, Washington, DC
- National Intelligence University, Washington, DC
- Joint Forces Staff College, Norfolk, VA
- Joint Combined Warfighting School, Norfolk, VA
- Joint Advanced Warfighting School, Norfolk, VA
- Advanced JPME Reserve Component, Norfolk, VA

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United States Army

- Army War College, Carlisle, PA
- United States Army Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, KS

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United States Air  
Force

- Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, AL
- Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, AL

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United States Navy

- Naval War College, College of Naval Warfare and College of Naval Command and Staff, Newport, RI

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United States Marine  
Corps

- United States Marine Corps War College, Quantico, VA
- United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, VA

# Appendix III: Recommendations Made by the Military Education Coordination Council (MECC) in Its Study of Joint Professional Military Education

The MECC made a total of 21 recommendations, which collectively address the study’s two objectives and span four categories, including: (1) desired leader attributes, or educational outcomes; (2) joint education continuums; (3) lifelong learning and advancements in learning technologies; and (4) faculty quality. Several of these recommendations call for additional study by the National Defense University and the services to support the achievement of leader attributes. Other recommendations emphasize the importance of strengthening the educational outcomes at the primary level of joint education, making education programs more accessible, and using prior learning assessments to tailor education opportunities to students’ needs, among other things. Table 2 lists the recommendations by category.

Table 2: Military Education Coordination Council (MECC) Recommendations by Category	
Recommendation Category	Recommendation
Desired leader attributes/ subattributes/ educational outcomes	The MECC should adopt the desired leader attributes as guideposts for officer joint education.
	A “whiteboard” approach should be conducted to develop a separate and distinct set of desired leader attributes to guide enlisted joint education.
	Develop/refine appropriate educational outcomes to support achievement of the desired leader attributes across a career via the Officer Professional Military Education Policy (OPMEP)/Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy (EPMEP) revision processes.
	National Defense University and the services should conduct further study to evaluate potential educational tools (including online learning, gaming, and simulation technologies) that are available to support achieving the desired leader attributes’ educational outcomes, particularly for specific desired leader attributes.
	Review specific subject areas for increased emphasis within joint education via the OPMEP and EPMEP revision processes, including cyber warfare, cultural considerations in planning, interagency and intergovernmental operations, information and economic instruments of national power, writing with precision, operations with private entities, and professional ethics.
	The joint training community should conduct/continue efforts aimed at achieving the desired leader attributes.
Joint education continuums	Joint functional communities should incorporate the desired leader attributes into their education and training programs as appropriate.
	Determine the appropriate weighting of emphasis of the desired leader attributes along the education continuums via the OPMEP/EPMEP revision processes.
	Strengthen the educational outcomes at the primary level of joint education for junior officers within the OPMEP revision process to enhance achievement of the desired leader attributes (while retaining balance with service primary level educational requirements).
	Explore the use of prior learning assessments to aid in tailoring education opportunities.

**Appendix III: Recommendations Made by the  
Military Education Coordination Council  
(MECC) in Its Study of Joint Professional  
Military Education**

Recommendation Category	Recommendation
	National Defense University should explore potential opportunities for making increased joint education content available for junior officers via distance learning capabilities.
	Services should explore earlier determination of follow-on assignments from education to allow tailoring of educational opportunities, recognizing that experience is critical to fully develop the desired learning attributes in service members.
	National Defense University should explore breaking the senior enlisted JPME course into two phases, one to serve the E-6/ E-7 community and a second to serve the E-8/E-9 community.
	Revise the EPMEP to establish a fourth level of enlisted JPME: Command Senior Enlisted Leaders. KEYSTONE remains aligned with the enlisted PME “executive-level” for specific command senior enlisted leader positions.
<u>Lifelong learning and advancements in learning technologies</u>	<p>National Defense University should conduct a study to explore opportunities to implement elements of lifelong learning in support of joint education. The study should examine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current service efforts toward establishing lifelong learning capabilities.</li> <li>Best lifelong learning practices within the civilian academic community.</li> <li>Incorporating the development of lifelong learning skills in education program curricula.</li> <li>Opportunities to leverage advanced education technologies to support lifelong learning including potentially partnering with the Advanced Distributed Learning Initiative.</li> </ul> <p>National Defense University and the services should explore opportunities to make content from their education programs available.</p> <p>Services should explore opportunities to incentivize and reward lifelong learning.</p>
<u>Faculty quality</u>	<p>Services should establish procedures/policies for special selection of military personnel for joint education faculty duty and to recognize/reward faculty duty.</p> <p>Services and National Defense University should review civilian hiring practices/policies to ensure the highest level of quality and proper breadth of subject-matter expertise within their faculties, with an eye on whole-of-government approaches in today’s security environment.</p> <p>Services and National Defense University tailor faculty development programs to ensure members can educate to the desired leader attributes and sustain current, relevant, and rigorous curricula.</p> <p>In light of the new desired leader attributes and lifelong learning strategy, current standards that address the requirements for faculty development should be reexamined within the OPMEP revision process.</p>

Source: DOD

# Appendix IV: Comments from the Department of Defense



## THE JOINT STAFF

WASHINGTON, DC

4 October 2013

Ms. Brenda Farrell  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548


Dear Ms. Farrell:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) Draft Report, GAO-14-29, "Joint Military Education: Actions Needed to Implement DoD Recommendations for Enhancing Leadership Development," dated 18 September 2013 (GAO 351810). I appreciate GAO's effort in examining the analytical approach used by the Military Education Coordination Council (MECC) in conducting our Review of Joint Education and the opportunity to provide this response on behalf of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The purpose of this Chairman-directed, internal review was to ensure our joint education enterprise will enable us to develop agile and adaptive leaders with the requisite values, strategic vision, and critical thinking skills to keep pace with the changing security environment. From our perspective, the MECC accomplished the specific tasks as assigned and met the Chairman's intent for the review. We believe much of the draft GAO report validates that perspective, specifically stating the MECC's methodology "generally included leading practices for evaluating strategic training and other programs, such as reviewing existing literature, using available data, and assessing skills gaps."

We note that within the report the GAO makes two recommendations concerning timeframes for implementation of Review of Joint Education recommendations and assessing any associated costs of implementing recommendations. As we determine which of the Review of Joint Education recommendations will be pursued, the Joint Staff will develop appropriate timelines for and consider costs of implementation as necessary. Please see the enclosure for our detailed response to the two GAO recommendations.

Sincerely,

  
FREDERICK S. RUDESHEIM  
Major General, USA  
Vice Director, Joint Staff

Enclosure

**GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED SEPTEMBER 18, 2013  
GAO-14-29 (GAO CODE 351810)**

**“Joint Military Education: Actions Needed to Implement DOD Recommendations for  
Enhancing Leadership Development”**

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** To guide the implementation of actions DOD identified in its study on JPME, GAO recommends that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff direct the Director for Joint Force Development, to establish well-defined timeframes for conducting follow-on actions, coordinate with all stakeholders, and identify key officials responsible for implementing the study's recommendations to help ensure the usefulness, timeliness, and implementation of any actions DOD takes in response to the findings and recommendations contained in its study.

**DOD RESPONSE:** The DOD concurs with this recommendation. As the Joint Staff pursues implementation of Review of Joint Education (RJE) recommendations, the Joint Staff will establish timelines, identify Offices of Primary Responsibility, and coordinate with appropriate stakeholders as appropriate. This effort is already in progress, with the first phase of activity dedicated to updating the CJCS' Professional Military Education (PME) policies to ensure that the policy directives driving PME are consistent with the results and recommendations of the RJE. Specifically, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 1800.01, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy* (OPMEP) and CJCSI 1805.01, *Enlisted Professional Military Education Policy* (EPMEP), are already in the process of being revised with a targeted completion of summer 2014.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** To guide the implementation of actions DOD identified in its study on JPME, GAO recommends that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff direct the Director for Joint Force Development, to assess the costs of implementing recommendations made, and efficiencies to be derived from the recommendations in order to implement DOD's recommendations in a cost-effective manner.

**DOD RESPONSE:** The DOD concurs with this recommendation; it should however be noted that the recommendation expands the RJE beyond its original scope and purpose. This said, given the reality of resourcing today, the Joint Staff will, inherent to the decision process, consider costs and efficiencies prior to moving forward with implementation of any RJE recommendations. In addition, the RJE final report recognized current resource constraints and stated that, to the maximum extent possible, implementation of recommendations should take place via OPMEP and EPMEP processes, using established procedures as opposed to creating separate efforts for implementation. A number of the recommendations will be implemented via policy changes, which are cost neutral. As the primary focus of the RJE was on curriculum, potential changes will also be made within existing curriculum review processes. Using standing processes will lead to cost efficiencies. The Services will also consider costs and efficiencies for recommendations under their purview.



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# Appendix V: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contact

Brenda S. Farrell (202) 512-3604 or [farrellb@gao.gov](mailto:farrellb@gao.gov).

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## Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the individual named above, David Moser, Assistant Director; Richard Burkard; Timothy Carr; Gustavo Crosetto; Melissa Emrey-Arras; Jennifer Madison; Terry Richardson; Jennifer Weber; and Erik Wilkins-McKee made key contributions to this report.

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